

- **Belmont Warrant Committee Meeting Minutes**  
- **FINAL**  
- **March 25, 2009, 7:30 p.m.**  
- **Chenery Middle School Community Room**

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- Present: Chair Curtis; Members Brusch, Callanan, Epstein, Heigham, Libensen, Lynch, Millane, Smith, Widmer; BOS Chair Firenze, School Committee Chair Bowe

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- Town Administrator Younger, Assistant Town Administrator Conti, Town Accountant Hagg, Town Treasurer Carman

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- Members Absent: Allison, Hofmann, McLaughlin and Paolillo

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- The meeting was called to order at 7:33 pm by Chair Curtis.

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- Chair Curtis began the meeting by turning to BOS Chair Firenze to give the Master Plan update.

- ***Master Plan Update – Decision of FY09 Funding for Completion of Project***

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- BOS Chair Firenze noted that money was allocated in the FY09 budget to allow the Planning Board to look at areas across town that could be developed. The Planning Board has been working hard on a plan for the town that is comprehensive in nature. Perhaps the Kendall money, which has been used for planning purposes, could be utilized to cover the \$75K needed in FY10's budget to continue the Master Plan process. Member Brusch said that she thought this would be a good use of general fund money in normal circumstances, but not when layoffs are happening. Chair Curtis agreed that the general fund should not be used for this effort under the current circumstances, and added that using the Kendall insurance fund, as suggested by Chair Firenze, *would* be appropriate for funding the Master Planning effort. Member Smith asked two questions: "What does \$75K get us?" and "What is left in the Kendall fund?" BOS Chair Firenze said that Mr. Szklut would need to speak to the first question. There is \$3M remaining in the Kendall fund, offered Town Accountant Hagg.

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- Chair Curtis took a "straw" vote. The WC was unanimous in its support of requesting TM to transfer \$75K out of the Kendall fund to cover the Master Plan.

- ***Proposal for Covering 9(c) Shortfall***

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- Town Accountant Hagg: There were \$274K in total 9 (c) cuts. The town felt that the hiring freeze which went into effect last fall could make up for their portion of the cuts (\$127K). This left approximately \$150K. Chair Curtis noted that, since the schools can't cover this gap, there are two choices: reduce spending more, or take the \$150K

from free cash. Free cash started at \$2.6M, \$800K was applied to the FY10 budget for operating, which leaves \$1.8M in free cash. Chair Curtis suggested taking \$147K out of free cash to balance the FY09 budget, and the group agreed. \$1.65M is the remaining free cash.

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### ***Reserve Fund – Balance vs. Possible Calls on Funds***

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- Town Accountant Hagg: There is currently \$83K left in the Reserve Fund. \$100K will be returned back from the Kendall fund and \$26K will be restored from fire insurance. The new Reserve Fund total will be \$209K.

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- Regarding the Snow Budget, Chair Curtis noted that we are almost \$500K short. Public Works can carry \$100K of that, but we will need an additional \$400K to cover snow removal. Do we know, Curtis asked, if additional claims will be made against the Reserve Fund? Town Accountant Hagg said she believed it was just snow at this point. If we apply \$200K from the Reserve Fund to cover the snow removal deficit, we are still \$200K short on the snow fund, noted Hagg. Chair Curtis suggested using free cash: \$1.65M - \$200K = \$1.45M in free cash. The group agreed. The BOS would like to carry all of the remaining free cash over to FY10 as free cash, Curtis added.

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### ***OPEB – FY10 Funding – Health Insurance Benefit***

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- Chair Curtis: The town auditors have made two recommendations in the Management letter for the year ending June 30, 2008, regarding OPEB. One is a wording change, explained Town Accountant Hagg. The original language approved by the legislature needs to be changed and then once that is done, it was suggested that the town apply to the IRS to create a tax exempt trust fund for the OPEB trust. Chair Curtis suggested that this language correction be put on the TM Warrant. \$150K is the slated contribution from the General Fund for OPEB in the FY10 budget. Member Widmer suggested adding that amount to the list of “moving pieces.”

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- Town Accountant Hagg added that each enterprise system will have its own OPEB contribution in FY09 for the first time. The Light Department will fund its portion entirely, and once that is paid off, they won't have a liability. Water and sewer suggested appropriations which will not be the full portion, but a small amount to help mitigate the affect on ratepayers, she said.

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### ***Collective Bargaining Timeline***

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- Town Administrator Younger said that HR Director Crimmins is scheduling a third set of meetings for next week. SC Member Rittenburg (from the audience) said that the SC has had one meeting and is hoping to meet again in early April.

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### ***Budget Timeline***

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- Chair Curtis: On June 1<sup>st</sup>, the WC will present two budgets to TM: an “available funds” budget, and an “override” budget. The available funds budget (non-override) will be impacted (up or down \$2M) by the ongoing collective bargaining negotiations. May 4<sup>th</sup> is the deadline by which we will need to know the override number. The available funds budget deadline could be later, since it is independent of the override number. BOS Chair Firenze said he hopes to know the available funds number by April TM, so as to have a meaningful budget discussion there. Chair Curtis gave a Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup> deadline for the available funds budget number. The WC and BOS will meet jointly on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, which was determined to be the wage freeze deadline.

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### ***Discussion of Federal Stimulus Funds***

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- Chair Curtis noted that while Belmont is slated to receive \$1.3M in stimulus funds for education, the town may actually wind up with much less. Governor Patrick allocated \$1.3M for Belmont, but the legislature is looking at push back from other communities, like Boston. If the stimulus money went through, the legislature would remove Chapter 70 funds, making for a zero net result for Belmont. Member Widmer: The legislature will decide. As of right now, the underlying assumptions for FY10 are not changed by the stimulus money. BOS Chair Firenze noted that Belmont got the \$1.3M because Belmont is under the foundation budget. We could argue, he said, that we shouldn’t get penalized. Member Bruschi said that the Governor changed the formula on January 28<sup>th</sup>, and that Belmont was not under foundation until Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>.

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### ***FY10 Budget Discussion for April 1st***

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- The WC will discuss next week: the OPEB money contribution, the free cash split, the FY10 budget. Also, the Retirement Board will attend the meeting.

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### ***Minutes of 3/18/09***

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- The minutes of 3/18/09 were approved, with two abstentions from absent members.

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### ***Executive Session to Discuss Collective Bargaining Issues***

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- The Warrant Committee moved to enter into Executive Session at 8:37 to discuss collective bargaining issues. The WC will not return to Open Session. A roll call vote was taken and all WC members voted aye.

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- Submitted by Lisa Gibalerio  
- WC Recording Secretary